

2006 Legislative Report

State Representative **Brendan Williams**

WINTER 2006

Dear Neighbor:

As we head into a short 60-day legislative session, improved state revenue allows for prudent budget revisions. I believe we can leave a healthy "rainy day account" while still spending money to do better by vulnerable kids and adults. I will not be complicit in balancing our state budget on their backs.

For example, representing House Democrats in two assignments involving disabilities issues further convinced me that community-based services and vocational opportunities for those with disabilities are shamefully under-funded. How is this tolerable in a just society?

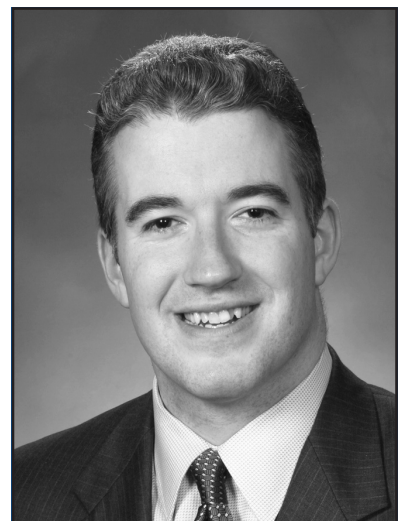
The budget is facing unavoidable new demands. The state prison caseload is climbing and our schools are over-crowded with students. Working families need more stability from our state pension system – pensions are a promise to workers we must keep.

This letter highlights some of the issues that I am taking the lead on this session, but I know that there's a lot more work to be done. Please email me with your ideas. Together, we can keep Washington strong.

Sincerely,



Brendan Williams
State Representative
22nd Legislative District



Representative **Brendan Williams**

Committee assignments:

- Judiciary, Vice Chair
- Financial Institutions & Insurance
- Criminal Justice & Corrections

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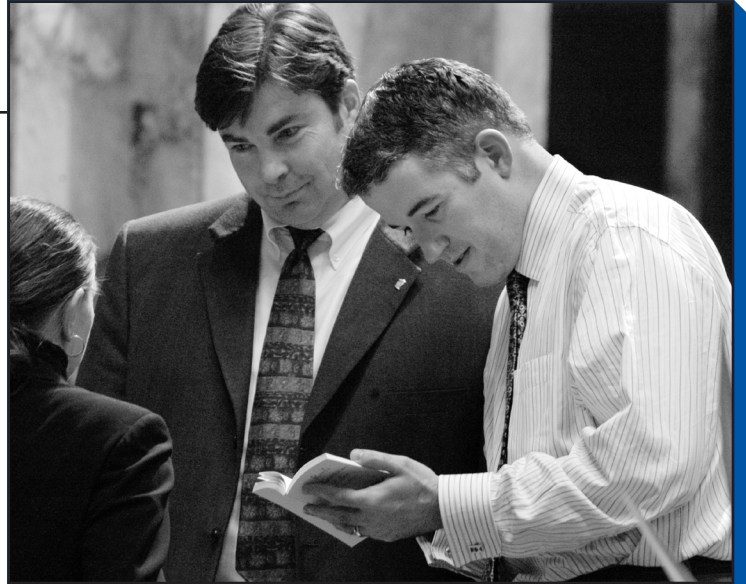
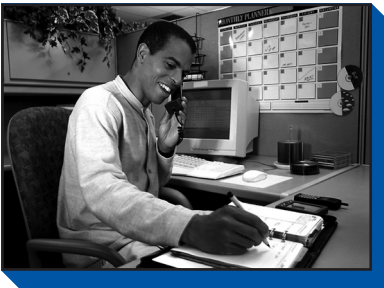
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◆ Budget Issues: Two Prudent Local Investments

Create Local Job Opportunities

With almost 30,000 Thurston County residents commuting outside the county for work (not counting military personnel), we need to develop local jobs. One small way the state can help: The Thurston County Chamber is working to create a Small Business Incubator. With a modest state investment, giving small businesses space and tools to succeed can generate a healthy return in local jobs and economic development.



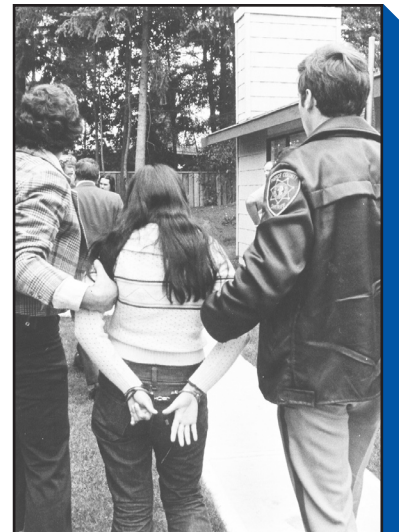
Support the Health Care Safety Net

Led by Dr. Stephen Albrecht, Thurston County Project Access facilitates the donation by local health care providers of medical care for the uninsured. Project Access manages the care of its patient population, coordinating what would otherwise be patchwork philanthropy. The state should join Thurston County, Lacey and Tumwater in contributing toward the efficient operational expenses of Project Access.



◆ Court Funding Bill Pays Off for Thurston County

As House Judiciary Committee vice chair, my first session involved considerable work on a landmark court funding bill. Happily, that bill paid dividends locally, with over \$400,000 granted in December to Thurston County for criminal defense funding.



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◆ Policy Issues: Positive Change on the Horizon

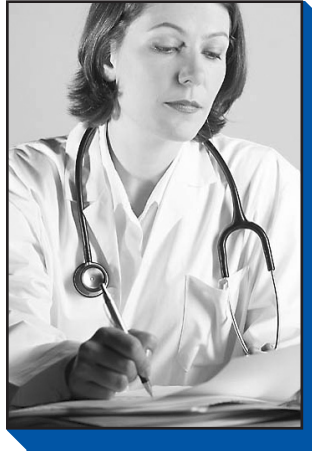
Women's Access to Health Care

It would be ironic if women's reproductive rights were negated not by conservative judges, but by insurance companies responding to terrorists. Yet an Olympia women's clinic faced loss of insurance coverage after an arsonist destroyed the facility.

The situation spoke to a larger problem. I am introducing legislation to protect insurance availability for health care providers, as well as other businesses and churches targeted by criminals.

As I write in an intent section of the legislation, "Rather than allow criminals to achieve their objectives, it is the intent of the legislature that criminals, through criminal acts, should not dictate insurance underwriting decisions."

We must all stand up for the rule of law, regardless of personal beliefs.



Facilitate Charitable Giving

A real testament to state employees is that they continued to be very generous in their charitable giving through the state's Combined Fund Drive, even though, until this past July 1, state employees had endured years without cost-of-living pay increases. I'm the prime sponsor of House Bill 2355, which would formally create a Combined Fund Drive Foundation, so as to better facilitate this charitable giving, as well as federal tax-deductibility for such giving.

Take Torture off the Menu

Foie gras is produced by enlarging the livers of ducks and geese to ten times normal size through force-feeding the birds with metal pipes shoved down their throats, forcing food directly into their stomachs. Many countries, and California, have banned this practice. My House Bill 2421 bans foie gras production in Washington immediately, and bans sale of foie gras by 2012 – the year California's ban becomes effective.

Protect Jobs from Unfair Competition

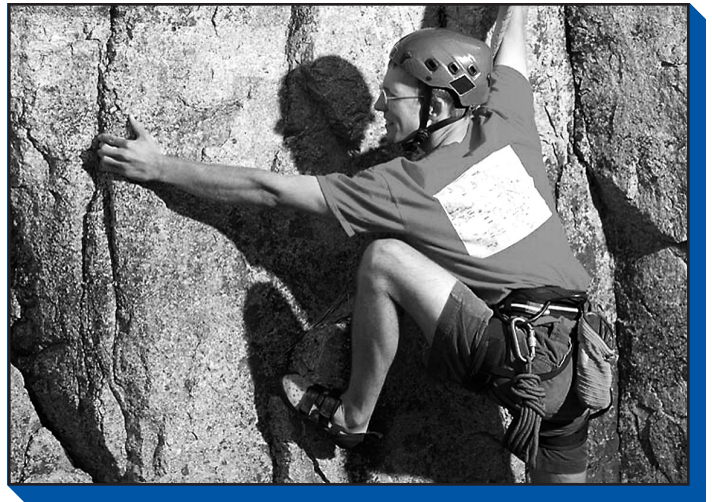
Current law protects Washington businesses from the unfair competition of correctional industries. My House Bill 2357 extends that protection to Washington jobs – preventing local governments from using inmate labor to displace public employees' jobs.

Sit-ups and Saving Lives

I will be sponsoring a bill to enhance high school health and fitness education by requiring CPR training. The bill is inspired by local doctor Curtis Edwards, who has enlisted the Washington State Medical Association's support.

Truth in Advertising Needed

Making the case for responsible fiscal policies can be complicated by misperceptions. Many believe the Washington Lottery funds more than it does. In fact, Lottery revenue is less than 1% of the total state budget. This fact should be stated in Lottery ads. Both the (Vancouver) Columbian and (Tacoma) News Tribune have strongly editorialized in favor of my "truth in advertising" bill: House Bill 2243.



Encourage Recreational Use of Private Lands

Another bill that I'm sponsoring, House Bill 2356, will open more private land to bird-watching, hiking, hunting, rock-climbing and other outdoor activities that so many of us living in the South Sound enjoy. The bill would immunize from liability private landowners who charge a small fee for purposes of outdoor recreation on their property, so long as all fee revenues go toward recreational access.

◆ New Committee Assignment

For the 2006 session, I leave the House Natural Resources, Ecology & Parks Committee and join the House Criminal Justice & Corrections Committee.

I advised the Washington Supreme Court on criminal law cases while a judicial law clerk from 1998-2000, and also possess a master's in criminal justice. My three law review articles concerned criminal law.

Atrocities committed by former Washington resident Joseph Duncan in Idaho have increased concern, including my own as a parent, over sex offenders. Sanctions for sex offenders, including post-incarceration monitoring, are sure to be enhanced this session. My House Bill 2454 protects communications between sexual assault victims and their advocates.

With regard to criminal justice generally, we must focus as much on crime prevention as on punishment. Safe alternatives to simply warehousing inmates are needed. Local models include the drug court that Judge Richard Strophy pioneered, and Judge Kip Stilz's mental health court efforts.

